Let's Take Another Look at the Shroud of Turin

Edward A. Brucker, M.D.

Dr. Brucker, an expert on the Shroud of Turin, is an Arizona physician and has written previously for Linacre.

Several articles have appeared recently in newspapers and magazines stating that the Shroud of Turin is a forgery and not the burial cloth of Christ.

What has happened is that three very qualified scientific centers tested, by carbon dating techniques, pieces of the Shroud of Turin and determined by multiple analyses that the cloth dates its origin between 1260 and 1380 A.D. Let's first review briefly the important aspects historically of the Shroud and then let's look at this question of forgery to determine if this is a reasonable conclusion.

We have recorded history of the Shroud appearing in the possession of Godfrey de Charney about 1354 in the village of Lirey, France, and at this same time period, from about 1356 to 1389, we have two bishops of Troyes (a village about 12 miles from the town of Lirey, France). The first bishop, Henry of Poitiers, and later Bishop Peter d'Arcis, writing letters to the popes, stated they were concerned about the Shroud being shown and venerated by the people when they knew it to be a cunning forgery, a painting, and not really the Shroud of Christ, and they personally knew the artist, but in neither instance did they name the individual and there is no record of a followup of these statements. The popes, and in particular Clement VII, in about 1389, wrote to Bishop d'Arcis and required of him to remain silent about this matter.

Characteristics of Shroud

The Shroud of Turin is a linen burial cloth, about 700 years old, with an imprint of a man and quite obviously not painted. Oh yes, there is iron oxide pigment in small amounts identified on the cloth, but certainly not in sufficient quantities to account for the frontal and dorsal image that we have of the body. We certainly expect some oxide present as there is

considerable amount of blood on the cloth, and the iron oxide seems to be more concentrated in these areas. The body imprint, according to Drs. Heller and Adler, is most likely an oxidation reduction process which has altered the cellulose fibers, possibly a chemical agent of some type. Scorching can alter the chemistry of the fibers but does not appear to be the correct method to explain all the features and changes on the Shroud.

Dr. Pellicori in different experiments with various materials and controlling temperature and humidity was able to change the chemistry of the linen fibers giving them a yellowish color (aging) and a color similar to that of the body stain, but he was unable to reproduce all the characteristics found in the Shroud.

The Shroud shows the full body imprint of a naked man with a head space area for the front and back image, plus scorched areas damaged by fire, and evidence of repair on the 24 holes produced by this fire in 1532 A.D. in Chambrey, France. The man also shows the effect of a severe scouraging, trauma to his head area, a large bleeding wound in the right heart area, left wrist and right foot. Drs. Heller and Adler chemically analyzed these blood stain areas and after multiple testings concluded that what was on the Shroud was whole blood and most probably human.

The cloth has been evaluated by many in the textile industry, and the consensus seems to be that it is of Syrian or Near Eastern origin. The type of weaving, the three-to-one herringbone pattern with a "Z" twist, seems to be more common in the Syrian area and was not known to have existed in Europe at this time.

Dr. Frei, a Swiss pathologist, and more recently Father Blust, have confirmed that there are rare forms of pollen on the Shroud from areas such as Judea and Turkey, and also Europe. This certainly would suggest the presence of the cloth in these areas at some point in time in the history of this cloth.

Three-Dimensional Figure

Drs. Jackson and Juniper, using a VP8 image analyzer which is a highly specialized computer used by the Air Force, were able to show that the imprint of the man on the cloth has a three dimensional feature and not two dimensional as a painting.

Father Filas of Loyola University in Chicago pointed out the button-like objects on the eyes. In reviewing pictures from 1930 he noted what seemed to be coins over the eyes, particularly the right eye, on which he identified the letters "U C A I" at approximately the 10:00 position. Father Filas's study showed that these were the remains of the letters from the name Tiberius Caeser. These coins, then, were minted around 30 A.D. by Pontius Pilate in honor of the Roman Emperor at that time.

Photography was very important in the history of this cloth as it shows a negative image. Secundo Pia, an Italian, took three pictures of the Shroud in 1898, and in developing the plates was startled to see that the Shroud

image was a negative, so that what he saw on his plates after developing was a complete positive image.

I have briefly reviewed the background of the Shroud. Now let us look at the artist who was capable of such an incredible feat. Whoever this person was, he was able by some unknown method to imprint on a linen cloth the complete frontal and dorsal image of a naked man, and also in some way was able to encode the imprint with a three dimensional capability, and he did this in the reverse form as a negative as we have seen from photography. He also in some way learned all about crucifixions a thousand years before in 325 A.D. Thus, this artist, knowing nothing about crucifixion, was able to produce a man showing damage to the scalp, nails in the wrists which even today most artists put in the palms of the hands which is incorrect; he pierced the right heart which most of the current artists do on the left side which is also incorrect, had the man scourged, and was apparently trying to portray the man as Christ. He portrayed the blood stains with actual human blood and put the blood markings on before he put the imprint of the man on the cloth. He knew about blood flow on the cross, and the body movements necessary to sustain life, and how blood coagulation occurs.

If this is not enough, he obtained a Syrian cloth with pollen embedded in the fibers from Judea and Turkey, and put coins on the eyes from the realm of Pontius Pilate.

Where did the portrait of the man on the Shroud originate for artists to portray?

Early Art Work

The pre-1300 A.D. art work shows a very similar appearing Christ, a man with long hair, moustache, forked beard, with unusual markings on his forehead, large eyes and long skinny nose. These portraits were very popular in the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, but to udnerstand these we must go as far back as the 6th century. This takes us to a town in southern Turkey called Edessa where history records that a cloth existed which had on it the face of a man, and it was called the "face not made by hands." It was known as the "mandylion", an interesting Byzantine word to describe the face on this cloth. The face of Edessa was extremely important, so much so that the Emperor Justinian II in about 685 A.D. had coins minted with this face of Edessa on the coins. Also, various art work, paintings and icons, had taken on this same appearance. The icon in St. Catherine's Monastery, which is located in the Siani Peninsula, shows a beautiful bust of Christ from about 550 A.D. The Spas Neredites is a copy of the mandylion from about 1199 A.D. and is presently in a museum in Moscow. Also, the face of Leon in France dates to about 1249 A.D. These are only a few of the many art works depicting Christ with all the appearances of having been copied from the original mandylion, or face of Edessa.

I mentioned above that the Shroud was very important — so important that the Byzantine Emperor Romanus Lecopenus sent his armies to Edessa to have the cloth brought to Constantinople which was around 943 to 944 A.D., and it was kept there until 1204 A.D. at the time of the Fourth Crusade when a knight by the name of Robert De Clair, a writer for the Fourth Crusade, described many of the treasures of Constantinople and in particular he mentioned a cloth with the imprint of Christ being shown in the church of St. Mary Blacharne in that city. However, in 1204 A.D., the crusaders sacked and destroyed the city. There is no further mention in history of the "mandylion".

Medically it would seem that a human body was used as the model producing the imprint of the body on the Shroud. How this was accomplished is difficult to understand since the man was scourged, crucified, and died and the torture of the cross was very evident. The body was removed before it decomposed so the imprint and blood stains transferred, yet the body was removed within 48 to 72 hours before changes in the imprint could occur. If the Shroud were two thousand years old, it would be easier to explain than our Shroud of 700 years old.

Questions Need Answers

I would like to list some of the questions that need to be resolved before we consider the Shroud a forgery or write this off merely as a piece of art work from the 13th century.

1. Syrian or Near East cloth. Why?
2. Photographic negative. Why and how?
3. Coins on the eyes. Why?
4. Coins from Pontius Pilate period. Why?
5. Three dimensional encoded fibers. How?
6. Real blood stains. Why use real blood?
7. Naked man. Why?
8. Complete front-back images with head space. Must have been in a shroud.
9. Nails in wrist. Unusual.
10. Heart wound, right side. Unusual.
11. Pollen from the East — Turkey, Judea. How?
12. Knew all about crucifixion. How?
13. Why did so many accept it as real, or at least different?
14. No other artwork like it — the only one.
15. Image forming process act through space, not by contact (image on back is same intensity as the front).
16. Unusual blood flow patterns with correct angles.

For thirty years I have always ended my talk with the question, "Who do you think this man really is?", and even with the present carbon dating, I do not think I can change that question. Who do you think this man really is?

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